

Minutes of the meeting of the **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Monday, 20 February 2023 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor C D Zosseder

Councillors: D G Beaney (as substitute for Councillor R S Walkden)  
P M Brivio  
S S Chandler (as substitute for Councillor D A Hawkes)  
D R Friend  
M Rose  
P Walker  
H M Williams

Also Present: Councillor C A Vinson (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance, Digital and Climate Change)

Officers: Chief Executive  
Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)  
Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)  
Strategic Director (Place and Environment)  
Head of Finance and Investment  
Accountant (Housing)  
Senior Accountant  
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager

#### 74 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T A Bond, D A Hawkes and R S Walkden.

#### 75 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, Councillors D G Beaney and S S Chandler had been appointed as substitute member for Councillors R S Walkden and D A Hawkes respectively.

#### 76 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D G Beaney declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the item on Fees and Charges 2023/24 (Minute No. 83) by reason of his ownership of a licensed premises and advised that he would withdraw from the meeting for the consideration of that item of business.

#### 77 MINUTES

The consideration of the Minutes was deferred.

#### 78 DECISIONS OF THE CABINET RELATING TO RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no decisions to consider.

79 ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY PUBLIC PETITION, COUNCIL, CABINET, OR ANOTHER COMMITTEE

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager advised that there were no issues referred to the Committee by Council, Cabinet or another Committee.

80 NOTICE OF FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager presented the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions to the Committee for its consideration.

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the Notice of Forthcoming Key Decisions.

81 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager presented the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme to the Committee for its consideration.

Members were advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott, had declined the invitation to meet with the Committee.

In the absence of any dissent, it was agreed to note the Work Programme.

82 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic and Corporate Services Manager advised that no members of the public had registered to speak on items on the agenda to which the public speaking protocol applied.

83 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24

The Head of Finance and Investment presented the report on Fees and Charges 2023/24.

It was agreed with the affirmation of the meeting

RESOLVED: That it be recommended to Cabinet:

- (a) That the Fees and Charges (F&Cs) for 2023/24 as set out in Appendices 2.1 to 2.14, and 5.1 (except for the s.106 Monitoring Fee which has been approved by the Planning Committee) and 5.3.1, be approved.
- (b) That it be agreed that any F&Cs will be adjusted by Strategic Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holders, to comply with any subsequently received government guidelines (when they are received) and any other minor changes without being the subject of a further report unless they are materially different from current charges or have a material impact on the level of income.

- (c) That it approves the general principle that fees are set at an appropriate inclusive level, irrespective of VAT status, and that the VAT element within the overall fee level is then determined.
- (d) That it notes the F&Cs approved separately by the Licensing and Regulatory Committees set out in Appendices 3 and 4.

(Councillor D G Beaney declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest by reason of his ownership of a licensed premises and withdrew from the meeting for the consideration of the item of business.)

84 COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023/24–2026/27

The Strategic Director (Finance and Housing) presented the report on the Council Budget 2023/24 and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023/24-2026/27.

Members were advised that the proposed Council Tax increase of 2.98% meant that Dover District Council still had the lowest Council Tax in East Kent. The forecast deficit in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was from planned works and the Capital Programme was fully funded although resources were depleted.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance, Digital and Climate Change, Councillor C A Vinson was also in attendance.

Members considered the report and raised the following points:

- To acknowledge the difficulties in long-term planning with uncertainties over funding streams under review by the Government.
- To discuss the impact of any future Business Rate revaluation on the Council. Members were advised that it should have a neutral impact on the Council but it would not be certain until it had been conducted.
- That the small percentage of the Council Tax that went to the Council compared to other preceptors should be emphasised in any publicity and billing.
- To discuss the future of the smoothing reserve and how it would be rebuilt.
- The impact of savings requirements on the Council.
- To welcome the digital reserve and highlight the benefit that investing in digital services had in modernising the Council.
- To question whether sufficient provision had been made to resolve damp and mould issues in Council housing. Members were advised that the allocated provision had been made in consultation with Property Services.
- To discuss how the budget could be made more accessible to residents in future, possibly through greater use of visual aids such as pie charts. Members were reminded that while this would be explored further the report had to fulfil its primary statutory purposes.

It was agreed with the affirmation of the meeting

**RESOLVED:** That it be recommended to Cabinet that the General Fund Revenue Budget, the Capital and Special Projects Programmes, the Housing Revenue Account budget and the content of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), as proposed in Appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm.